RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, the 4th August, 1993/the 13th Sravana, 1915 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Oath or affirmation.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI : He escaped the axe of the Election Commissioner.

MR. CHAIRMAN : We must congratulate him for that.

MEMBER SWORN

Shri Govindrao Wamanrao Adik (Maharashtra).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Abolition of Octroi in the Country

*121. SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH †
SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether any meeting of Chief Ministers/ Governors was recently held in Delhi to break the deadlock over some States refusal to abolish *'pathkar'* and octroi; if so, whether any decision was taken at the said meeting;

(b) whether some States have sought relief for scrapping octroi, if so, the detils thereof;

(c) whether Central Government have so far taken any decision to compensate the States which have expressed their inability to do away with the octroi; and

(d) by when the Committee of six Chief Ministers headed by the Chief Minister of West Bengal, expected to submit its Report to Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

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†The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Digvijay Singh.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir. A meeting of the Governors/ Chief Ministers of Octroi/*Pathkar* levying States was held under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister on 14th July, 1993 in New Delhi. In the meeting it was decided to set up a Committee of six State Chief Ministers with West Bengal Chief Minister Shri Jyoti Basu as its Chairman. The Committee would have as its Members, the Chief Ministers of Gujarat, Haryana, Bihar, Maharashtra, Orissa and Dr. Raja Chellaiah, Economic Adviser to Government of India.

(b) No, Sir. However, according to the States levying Octroi, the main reason for not abolishing it is their inability to find out an alternative source of revenue.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) The Committee is expected to submit its report within six months from 1-8-1993. The Ministry of Finance has been requested to formulate the terms of reference of the Committee and issue the notification constituting the Committee.

श्री दिग्विजय सिंह : सभापतिजी, सारी दुनिया में चुंगी कर को समाप्त कर दिया गया है । भारतवर्ष में भी सिर्फ छह राज्यों में यह कर लिया जाता है । केंद्र सरकार ने इसकी गंभीरता को समझते हुए जो केंद्र शासित इलाके हैं, वहां भी चुंगी कर समाप्त कर दिया है और इन छह राज्यों के चलते आज पूरे देश में टैक्स का बहताल है । यह सवाल आज इसलिए ज्यादा गंभीर है कि पूरा देश परेशान है ।

मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहूंगा—आज इसके दुनियावी कारण दो ही हैं—एक तो राज्यों के आय की कमी । राज्य सरकार यह सोच रही है कि अगर हम यह कर समाप्त कर देंगे, तो इसके बदले हमें जो आय के स्रोत हैं, वह कहां से आयेंगे ।

केंद्र सरकार अभी तक इसके बारे में कोई नतीजा नहीं निकाल पाई है कि राज्य सरकारें से यह कह सके कि इसके बदले में वह कौनसे स्रोत उनके लिए आवंटित करेगी ।

इसलिए मैं आपसे पूछना चाहूंगा कि जहां एक ओर आपकी और श्री ज्योति बसु की अध्यक्षता में कमेटी बनाई है राज्य सरकारों की, वहां दूसरी ओर आपने अपनी तरफ से इस तरह की कोई पहल की है, जिससे राज्य सरकारों को ऐसा आश्वासन हो सके कि उनके इस कर के समाप्त करने से उनको, राज्य की जो आय है, उसमें कोई कमी नहीं हो पायेगी ।

तो मैं आपसे यह जानना चाहूंगा कि आपकी तरफ से कोई ऐसा इनिशिएटिव हुआ है, ताकि राज्य सरकारें आश्वस्त हो सके ।

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Sir, I would like to inform the hon. Member that octroi is a State subject. The Centre has nothing to do with it. But when the last time the truck operators went on a strike one of their demands was abolition of octroi, *pathkar* and many other things which are related to the Centre. As far as the Centre-related things are concerned, we practically solved the problem to their satisfaction. Everytime when we took the initiative to remove the octroi from the State, no doubt, the Chief Ministers came and said : "What is the alternative source for the revenue which we are going to lose ?" Of course, as far as the Centre is concerned, the Centre is unable to give the revenue which they are going to lose, but we suggested something as far as the octroi case if concerned. In place of octroi the things which we suggested to them are imposition of a surcharge on sales tax or additional sales tax, a municipal sales tax or a municipal surcharge on sales tax, or an increase in the motor vehicles tax or a turnover tax. These are only suggestions because being a State subject we cannot tell them what is to be done or what is not to be done.

But I would like to inform the Hon. Members that a very encouraging sign has been that the Chief Minister of Maharashtra has constituted a committee and within three months they are coming out with an alternative source for the revenue to be collected. On the basis of that, in the last meeting which took place on the 14th of last month where the Prime Minister presided, I had formed a committee under the chairmanship of the West Bengal Chief Minister, Shri Jyoti Basu, so that various alternatives could be discussed. And, I think, within six months, they are going to come out with a report.

Before that, within three months, as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra has said that they are coming out with an alternative, we will take into account the suggestion which they would give to the Committee. And I hope that within six months, as far as octroi abolition is concerned, we will be able to ultimately fulfil it.

श्री दिग्विजय सिंह : सभापति महोदय, मैं पहले भी एक-दो बार आपका ध्यान इस ओर खींचना चाहता था, आज फिर मंत्री जी ने कहा कि यह राज्य का सवाल है । यह कह कर अगर यह राज्य का सवाल है तो ऐसे प्रश्नों को आप अपने अंदर में ले ही नहीं और अगर जब इस सवाल को आपने सदन के सामने जवाब देने के लिए रखा है तो आप पूरी जिम्मेवारी से इसका जवाब दें । राज्य सरकारों के ऊपर सिर्फ छोड़ देने से केन्द्र सरकार की जिम्मेवारी समाप्त नहीं हो जाती । क्योंकि आज जो यह ट्रकों की हड़ताल चल रही है तो उससे राज्य सरकारें और राज्यों के लोग ही प्रभावित नहीं हैं बल्कि इससे पूरा देश प्रभावित है । इसलिए यह गंभीर सवाल है, मंत्री जी, मैं आपसे कहना चाहूंगा कि कुछ राज्य सरकारों ने ऐसे प्रयास किए भी हैं । महाराष्ट्र है और शंकर राव चव्हाण जी यहां मौजूद हैं, उनका एक प्रयास इस दिशा में हुआ था और मुझे पता है कि वह प्रयास इसलिए असफल हो गया कि वहां के राज्य कर्मचारियों ने कहा कि अगर आप इसको समाप्त करेंगे तो हम पूरे राज्य को बंद कर देंगे । शायद इस दबाव में आकर माननीय शंकर राव चव्हाण जी उस काम को नहीं कर पाए जो उनको करना चाहिए था । इसलिए मैं आपसे कहना चाहूंगा कि इसमें कोई सख्ती से आप कदम उठाएं । अगर सिर्फ राज्य सरकारों पर आप छोड़ देंगे तो मामले का निपटारा नहीं हो पाएगा और फिर मैं आपसे कहूंगा कि राज्य सरकारों को आप कोई निर्देश देने का काम करें क्योंकि बहुत सी चीज़ें ऐसी हैं जिसमें आप सख्ती से काम ले सकते हैं । इस काम में आप राज्य सरकारों के ऊपर इतनी ढिलाई से छोड़े हुए हैं कि जिसका नतीजा यह है कि पूरा देश इसको भुगत रहा है । इसलिए मैं आपसे कहना चाहूंगा कि आप कोई सख्ती से केन्द्र सरकार की ओर से पहल करते हुए उनको निर्देश दें ताकि यह हड़ताल जल्दी से जल्दी समाप्त हो सके ?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. B. CHAVAN) : Sir, since my name has been mentioned, I would like to clarify that it was not only because of the threat given by some of the employees—in fact, that was one of the reasons—but the major reason was that there was no alternative source of income from which the revenue could be compensated to all those municipalities who would suffer ultimately. All these traders and others didn't agree and that is why it could not materialise.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH : When he was the Chief Minister, I had taken up this matter. Now that he has clarified, I may point out that on the eve of the strike at that time, he had given an assurance as Chief Minister that effective steps would be taken in that regard. And that assurance has not been fulfilled in the last five years. Several times this strike has taken place. During his time, this did not take place. Just because he has given a clarification, I am seeking this clarification.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Who is going to answer now ?

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Sir, I would like to answer the Hon. Member's question. We cannot give a direction to the State Governments because it is affecting the whole country.

That is why I have taken this initiative to coordinate with everybody so that some kind of a solutuon could be found. It is not that the Centre is sitting behind...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH : Are you advising your Ministry?

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : I am coming to that. What we had done was that last time when we had called the Transport Development Consultative Meeting, we discussed in that meeting and only on the basis of that, a meeting was held under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister and then we came out with this solution that we would, this time, make a very honourable senior Chief Minister Jyoti Basuji, in the country to head this committee because his State is also working on a certain alternative source of revenue to be collected if octroi is abolished, and Maharashtra is also working on it. So, I thought the best way to have Dr. Chelliah as adviser to this committee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal to chair this committee, and to have other Chief Ministers as members so that a solution could be found. The only thing which I find encouraging is that all the States are psychologically prepared to remove this octroi and *pathkar*. And I am very happy to say that within six months some kind of a solution would be found.

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल : सभापति जी चुंगीकर और पथकर, यह एक विवादास्पद कर बहुत दिनों से रहा है और इसके कारण ट्रक ऑपरेटर्स को शिकायतें, प्रशासन में भ्रष्टाचार और जनता को असुविधा तीनों प्रश्न लगे हुए, लेकिन इस गंभीर प्रश्न पर कई बार चर्चाएं और बातचीत हुई है और टूटती रही है, बातचीत के लिए आगे का रास्ता निकलता रहा और यही क्रम जारी रहा है साथ ही जनता को असुविधाएं बढ़ती रही हैं। सभापति जी, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं मंत्री महोदय से कि आखिर आपकी पार्टी की, आपकी सरकार की नीति क्या है चुंगीकर और पथकर को खत्म करने के मामले में, मेरा एक छोटासा प्रश्न बीच में तो यह है और दूसरा यह कि अगर आपकी नीति ऐसी है कि चुंगीकर और पथकर समाप्त हो सकता है जैसाकि उस समय के मंत्री राजेश पायलट जी ने कहा था कि हमने पांडिचेरी और दिल्ली केन्द्र-शासित राज्यों में इसको समाप्त कर दिया है, तो मेरे प्रश्न का दूसरा भाग यह है कि क्या जो इस समय आपके केन्द्र-शासित राज्य हैं जिनमें कि राष्ट्रपति शासन है जैसेकि राजस्थान, मध्यप्रदेश और हिमाचल प्रदेश, उनमें भी चुंगीकर को समाप्त करने के लिए जैसे कि आपने पांडिचेरी और दिल्ली में समाप्त किया था उसी प्रकार से इन राज्यों में तुरंत चुंगीकर और पथकर को वापिस लेने की घोषणा आप क्यों नहीं कर सकते?

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Sir, I would like to inform the honourable Member that this is a part of our Congress (I) manifesto, when we went to the poll, that octroi would be abolished. So, we are committed to that, to seeing that octroi is abolished. But, it being a State subject, you cannot give a direction to the States... *(Interruptions)*...Let me complete it...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल : लेकिन अभी तो ये राज्य आपके हाथ में हैं मध्यप्रदेश, राजस्थान और दूसरे राज्य।

MR. CHAIRMAN : Give the Minister a chance to reply first.

श्री जगदीश टाइटलर : मैं यही बताना चाहता हूं कि लास्ट टाइम जब हमने यह वायदा किया था कि हम ऑक्ट्राय दिल्ली से हटा देंगे, मुझे खुशी है कि हमने वह वायदा पूरा किया और दिल्ली से ऑक्ट्राय हटा दिया। अभी भी स्ट्राइक से पहले जब हम आपस में बातचीत कर रहे थे, राजस्थान के जो गवर्नर हैं उनसे मेरी बात हुई तो उन्होंने कहा कि हम पथकर भी हटाने के हक में हैं और हम ऑक्ट्राय भी 15 अगस्त से हटा देंगे मगर क्योंकि अब ज्योति बसु जी की चैयरमेनशिप में यह कमेटी बनी हुई है, हम चाहेंगे कि हम इंतजार करें क्योंकि महाराष्ट्र ने एक कदम उठाया है जिससे कि वह आल्टरनेटिव सोर्स ऑफ रेवेन्यू निकालेंगे और जैसे ही महाराष्ट्र का एक्जाम्पल हमारे सामने आएगा, वह एक्जाम्पल हम ज्योति बसु जी की कमेटी के सामने रखेंगे और मुझे पूरा विश्वास है कि ऑक्ट्राय हटा सकेंगे। बाकी रही कांग्रेस रूल्ड स्टेट्स की बात तो मैंने अपनी कांग्रेस पार्टी के मैनिफेस्टो के बारे में आप लोगों को बता ही दिया है, दिल्ली इसमें सबसे पहले आता है जिस स्टेट से मैं बिलांग करता हूं, दिल्ली से हमने ऑक्ट्राय हटा दिया है और राजस्थान की बात मैंने आपके सामने रखी है।

श्री महेश्वर सिंह : सभापति महोदय, यह बात सर्वविदित है कि हिमाचल प्रदेश का किसान और बागवान हर वर्ष लाखों टन सब्जियां और फल पैदा करता है और वहां पर यातायात का एक ही मात्र साधन रोड ट्रांसपोर्ट है। सभापति महोदय, हमारी मुख्य मंडी उत्पादन के लिए आपकी आजादपुर मंडी है, लेकिन जब से यह ट्रकों की स्ट्राइक चल रही है हिमाचल प्रदेश से सब्जी और फलों का एक भी ट्रक सब्जी मंडी तक नहीं आ रहा है। सभापति महोदय आजकल सब्जियों में टमाटर और फलों में नाशपति व सेब का सीजन जोरों पर है। वहां के बागवान और

किसानों को उनकी उपज का सही मूल्य नहीं मिल रहा है और मंत्री महोदय ने कहा कि उन्होंने किसी समिति का गठन किया है जोकि 6 माह में अपनी रिपोर्ट देगी, लेकिन तब तक तो यह फल और सब्जी का सीजन भी समाप्त हो जाएगा इसलिए मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहूंगा कि जब तक कि यह टक ऑपरेटर्स की हड़ताल समाप्त नहीं हो जाती, क्या सरकार कोई ऐसी समुचित व्यवस्था करेगी कि हिमाचल प्रदेश से ताकि सीजन वेजिटेबल और फल जोकि वहां के बागवानों और किसान की आय का प्रमुख साधन है, उनके आजादपुर सब्जी मंडी तक पहुंचाने की कोई व्यवस्था करेगी या कर रही है और अगर की है तो उसका ब्यौरा क्या है ?

श्री जगदीश टाइटलर : सर, मैं ऑनरेबिल मेम्बर को यह बताना चाहता हूँ कि यह बात सच नहीं कि फल और सब्जियां बिल्कुल दिल्ली नहीं आ रहीं, आ रही है मगर उस तादाद में नहीं आ रहीं जिस तादाद में आनी चाहिए । .....*(व्यवधान)*..... एक मिनट मुझे जवाब तो देने दो पूरा । हमने सेंटर की तरफ से स्टेट के गवर्नर साहब से, हरियाणा के चीफ मिनिस्टर से बातचीत की है कि टक ऑब्स्ट्रेक्शन हैं, पूरी पुलिस प्रोटेक्शन मिलेगी और जैसे ही यह हिमाचल से लेकर हरियाणा में घुसेंगे वहां भी स्टेट पुलिस प्रोटेक्शन देगी और जैसे दिल्ली बोर्डर में आएंगे यहां की प्रोटेक्शन दी जाएगी । लगर उसके बावजूद भी इनको टक नहीं मिलते, दिल्ली एडमिनिस्ट्रेशन के पास 200 टक हर वक्त खड़े हैं, जब भी कभी स्टेट गवर्नमेंट को या किसी भी गवर्नमेंट को जरूरत होगी, बस पैसे के ऊपर जो भी नोमिनल उसका किराया है उसके ऊपर यह टक ऑब्स्ट्रेक्शन हैं । जो हमें खबर आई है उस खबर के हिसाब से स्टेट गवर्नमेंट हिमाचल और हरियाणा दोनों के दोनों उस सुविधा की पूरी तैयारी में बैठे हुए हैं ।

श्री सभापति : श्री गुरुदास दासगुप्ता ।

श्री महेश्वर सिंह : सर, एक मिनट । सर, यहां तक मंत्री महोदय ने यह कहा कि हिमाचल की जो उपज है वह आ रही है, यह उनका स्टेटमेंट तथ्यों पर आधारित नहीं है । कृपया इसकी थोड़ी सी छानबीन करवा लीजिए । और जहां तक आपने हिमाचल के गवर्नर की बात कही, हिमाचल में तो भारतीय जनता पार्टी की सरकार में पथकर और ऑक्ट्राय दोनों ही समाप्त कर लिए हैं, समस्या तो जहां आपकी सरकार है, पंजाब, हरियाणा, उसने उत्पन्न की है । उनसे बात कीजिए । हिमाचल से टक आ जाएंगे । गवर्नर उसमें क्या करेंगे क्योंकि हिमाचल में न पथकर है और न ऑक्ट्राय है ।

श्री जगदीश टाइटलर : सर, ऑक्ट्राय तो हिमाचल में था नहीं पहले और पथकर.....*(व्यवधान)*..... मैं जवाब दे रहा हूँ, पथकर लगा हुआ था और हमने ही उसके ऑर्डिनेन्स को लेप्स होने दिया । वैसे इस वक्त पार्टी की बात नहीं है, इस वक्त देश के सामने एक समस्या आई है, हमको उस समय को कैसे हल करना है, उसके लिए हम पूरे तैयार बैठे हैं । .....*(व्यवधान)*.....

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Sir, it is very easy for the Central Government to become very generous. The Central Government is generous because the abolition of octroi will not lead to a loss of revenue to the Central Government. Therefore, it is very easy for them to become generous. But the main point is that octroi is a source of revenue to the State and the States are seriously suffering from resource constraint and the complaint of the States with regard to resource constraint has never been looked into by the Central Government that have come to power. Therefore, in view of this problem—acute shortage of funds, acute shortage of resources--that the States are facing, what steps will the Government kindly consider to campensate the loss that the States will suffer? This is part (a) of my question. Part (b) of my question is : Has the Central Government ever calculated the total revenue that is collected by the States ? Part (c) of my question is this : They like the States to impose additional sales tax. It will lead to the same problem. The truck drivers or the truck owners are against the octroi because that is in a way again increasing the load, financial load. If additional sales tax is imposed, has the Government ever considered what its impact is going to be on the price and also on the cost ?

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Sir, I would like to inform the Hon. Member that the State Governments did mention that it was going to be a revenue loss; that is why, as I said earlier, we had suggested an alternative source of revenue but we had not said that you did not collect the money at all; neither do we compensate nor do you collect the money. That has never been our stand. Money has to be collected. After all, money is needed; they have to run the States. The only thing which we are asking is—and it is also one of the demands of the truck operators that they should not be harassed at the stops.

We have suggested certain things and I would like to repeat and what we have said, "you can alternatively charge a turnover tax, increase on motor vehicles tax, municipal tax and municipal surcharge on sales tax, a surcharge on sales tax and additional sales tax." As far as the Centre is concerned, the Centre is not in a position to compensate. We are not going to tell them that we are going to compensate.

That is why under the chairmanship of Mr. Jyoti Basu Ji, a very senior Chief Minister, a committee has been formed and with the help

of the Maharashtra Chief Minister's committee, I think some kind of a solution will be found as to whether the money, thus, lost by octroi can be compensated by some other alternative source of revenue.

श्री सोमपाल : सभापति महोदय, मैं परिवहन मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहूंगा कि क्या सरकार ने कभी कोई ऐसा अध्ययन कराया है कि चुंगी कर से सभी राज्यों को देश में जितना राजस्व मिलता है, उसके मुकाबले में ट्रकों को रास्ते में रोकने से जो उनकी भार वहन क्षमता घटती है, उत्पादन में जो विलम्ब होता है और उसके ऊपर जो प्रशासनिक व्यय होता है, उसमें कितना अंतर है ? सम्भवत: आंकड़े ऐसे होंगे कि जितना राजस्व प्राप्त होता है, उसके मुकाबले में यह खर्चे और नुकसान ज्यादा होंगे । यदि ऐसे आंकड़े उपलब्ध हैं तो मंत्री जी बताने की कृपा करें और यदि नहीं है तो क्या वे ऐसा अध्ययन कराने का प्रयास करेंगे ?

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : I would like to inform the hon. Member that only by octroi States get Rs. 1,948 crores, but we have not done any study. The information with us is that this is the revenue loss. I think it is a very good suggestion and we will consider it.

SHRI G. G. SWELL : Sir, I would like to know whether the Minister is aware that the various militant groups in the North-East have their own octroi duties or by whatever name you may pronounce it. I am told that every truck that enters Nagaland has to pay Rs. 15,000/- to one or the other militant group. I would like to know whether the Minister is aware of this or he is the same like his counterpart in the Finance Ministry who, when we told him that the branches of the State Bank of India are closed and the people are leaving their jobs and we asked a question, said "We are collecting the information", and like his counterpart in the Coal Ministry who said when a question is put about coal being exported into Bangladesh for the last one year, "Information is being collected. We will lay it on the Table of the House". It is never laid. Is he aware of this state, this kind of a situation in the North-East ?

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Sir, as far as my Ministry is concerned, we are not aware. But I think the Home Ministry will be in a better position to answer his question.

SHRI G. G. SWELL : Will the Home Minister answer the question ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have to ask another question. Now, Shri Mentay Padmanabham.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM : Sir, I am one with the truck owners that octroi is a very very obnoxious tax and moreover it is an archaic tax. It should be abolished forthwith and there is no doubt about it. But as I heard the Minister, he is expressing his inhability about the Central Government compensating the State Governments for the revenue they are losing. On the other hand, the State Governments say that their ways and means position is so critical that they cannot afford to lose any revenue after abolition of octroi. I would like to ask the Minister whether this matter can be referred to the Tenth Finance Commission. To get over this impasse, I would like to know whether the Minister would consider referring the matter to the Tenth Finance Commission which is now sitting and is going to decide about the various formalities with regard to devolution of finances between the Centre and the States so that the State Governments as well as the Centre would bear some burden of the loss of revenue on account of abolition of octroi.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : As far as the two problems are concerned, we are already on the way to finding a solution. I am very confident that as far as *pathkar* and octroi are concerned, a solution would be found.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Question No. 122, Shri J. S. Raju .....*(interruptions)*.....

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN : Please permit me to put a question on this. I have been a Councillor and Mayor for the last 25 years.....*(interruptions)*.....

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have passed on to another question. Please do sit down *(interruptions)*.....

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN : I am for octroi. They want to remove octroi. But it should be continued. There is no alternative source of revenue.....*(interruptions)*.....

MR. CHAIRMAN : I cannot reopen the question, please. Please do sit down .....*(interruptions)*....

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN : Please allow us a half-an-hour discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN : We have taken nearly half an hour for this Question. You cannnot protest against this. Will you please sit down ?

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN : We want a half-

an-hour discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you want it, you give notice.

Losses Suffered by Indian Embassies due to Terrorist Activities

*122 SHRI J. S. RAJU :†

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian missions and their staff that came under attack from fundamentalists and terrorists abroad since January, 1993;

(b) the details of each incident, and loss of properties;

(c) whether any security steps have since been taken by our missions abroad, if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether any study has been conducted to tighten the security of our missions abroad; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Nil.

(b) Not applicable.

(c) to (e) The security of all our missions abroad is primarily, the responsibility of the host Government. However, depending on the security environment in the country and our threat perceptions, we usually augment these security arrangements by deploying India-based security guards and installing various types of security equipment. These security arrangements are periodically reviewed and suitably augmented in co-operation with the host Government. We have also undertaken a study of security measures in our missions abroad.

SHRI J. S. RAJU: Sir, the answer given by the Minister at part (a) is incorrect for, recently, when the issue of Babri Masjid was in the air, there was diplomatic harassment, and properties of the Embassy were damaged and the personnel were also injured. So also, during the Iran-Iraq confrontation, our Embassy personnel were actually manhandled and properties were damaged. The Minister is misleading the House with an incorrect statement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So, ask the question.

SHRI J. S. RAJU: So, I want the Minister to give a correct answer at least after my furnishing a few details that have appeared in the press.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: Sir, the question is about the number of Indian Embassies and their staff that came under attack from the fundamentalists and terrorists. He is referring to something that happened during the Iran-Iraq war.

SHRI J. S. RAJU: In total I am asking. Our Mission in Pakistan was attacked by the fundamentalists in Pakistan after the Babri Masjid incident.

MR. CHAIRMAN: After January, was there any incident?

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: No, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is the question.

SHRI J. S. RAJU: If they were not fundamentalists, what was the basis for the attack?

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: There is a period mentioned. The question is for the period after 6th January. And I am replying that after January, there was no attack. But if you are referring to Pakistan, I am ready to reply.

Sir, in Pakistan, there have been some incidents, but they were after the Babri Masjid affair took place. In Lahore, on 7th December, there was stone-throwing on the Indian Airlines office. On 7th December again, in Karachi, there was stone-throwing on the residential complex of our Mission. Again on 7th December, in Islamabad, 5 incidents of stone-throwing and intimidation at the residence of the personnel of the Indian Mission took place. Again, on 8th December, about 500 miscreants set the Consul General's house on fire. All his property was destroyed and his family members escaped by bolting themselves in the bedroom. And the security guard was also injured. Then, in Bangladesh, it also happened on the 7th. The High Commission Library was ransacked and set on fire. On the same day, the Indian Airlines office was also set on fire.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second supplementary.

SHRI J. S. RAJU: What are the results of the studies that you have undertaken? How are you going to supplement in the case of insufficient security system?

† The Question was actually asked on the floor